Letter No. 79. Sunday - Oct 26th

Major T. H. Massey.
6, Palestinian Coy. The Bulls.
M. E. F.

My dearest darling Barbara -

I do wish I could begin a letter with something exciting or thrilling to tell you. It would be so much better reading for you, & would give me so much more pleasure too. But there is nothing at all. I have written five letters so far this month, to the extent of 52 pages - & goodness knows what I have written about - I do hope that my letters are still interesting enough. You see, here I am now. There is really not one single important thing to tell you about me or about my life - not a single matter which you ought to know, & which will make any difference to anything - & yet I shall write from now, 9-0 pm, until I go to bed. I shall probably read odd bits from some of your old letters, & look at your photos & in my album, & think an awful lot of things about you, past, present, future, & talk to Peter a bit, & have a whiskey, & smoke some cigarettes - the result will be another evening passed, & several, we shall see how many, pages contributed towards your next letter. I'm not for a moment trying to make my letters to you appear to be a duty, even if they are, I want you to get as much & as many as possible from me - there is nothing else at all which I prefer to do. But, darling, they are so much made up of bits & pieces about me & my life - odds & ends about people & things. And sometimes I wonder, when things are like this, if I could not do just as well to write you one page - & tell you nothing has happened, & I am very well, very lonely, & missing you far more than I can possibly tell you in any words - that I love you desperately, & that

I will think always will, that you are the most perfect lovely woman in all the world - & love to Max & all my love to you. There would be the whole position in a nutshell. And this mark. I shall have expended over 60 pages & a great deal of time in telling you just those things. Oh darling - I do hope you like my letters. For example, I shall have written about two pages on this theme by the time I have exhausted it. And I have told you nothing at all - except to give you an insight into the workings of my mind from one other angle & not a particularly illuminating one either. It is perhaps silly to write in this way. I apologise for your letters from time to time & accuse yourself of being trivial & of boring me. But I am always. Quite apart from the talking & meeting parts, interested & charmed by your letters - very often amused too. And so I can only hope that my chatter is enough to please you - & that my letters never disappoint you.

Now, what shall I chatter about tonight, darling? I think I will tell you some more about Peter & my officers - the one is a constant pleasure to me, & the others are a constant irritation

Peter really affords me with the only wholehearted laughs which I get out here. He is such a priceless mixture - because in spite of being a very independent & strong minded little dagger, even to the extent of being positively disobedient - he cannot bear to see me

go off anywhere without him - & I'm sure since that all his comings & goings are controlled by the necessity of keeping me in the corner of his eye. Often, when I strike off in some direction or other, & I have no idea that he is anywhere about at all - he comes bounding along beside me with a broad grin all over his face, as much as to say "oh there you are" - (my mother could give you the expression to perfection). Yesterday morning, I went off on a bicycle to see the M.O., about half a mile away - & as fast as I went, he kept up - really amazing. Whilst there, an alarm went for a fire practice, very much like the air raid "all clear". The poor little chap remembers well the air raids of a few months ago, & connects at once such alarms with bombs & A.A. fire & flashes - & away he went under a table: I took him outside, he positively streaked for home, me following on the bike. And he has started two new tricks in the morning now - one to wake me up, which he does by rubbing a very cold wet nose on mine - & the other to be let out. I have said by rattling over my windows - & the other morning he got up on the table, & went straight through this, like a circus dog. So I had it replaced with fine wire gauze - he tried the same trick the next morning & literally bounced back off it into the room; he was furious & tried again with the same result after which he leapt onto my bed & dashed at me because I was laughing at him. I hope this does not bore you - but he certainly is a card.

As for my officers - oh God, but they bore me &

irritates me & infuriates me. I suppose most people would do, anyway — but Flake & Kalk & Aitken are the pink limit. It is a pity about Kalk, because I made him an officer myself — but he was a good, steady N.C.O. & did his duty, & being a solicitor in S. Africa, is well educated. But he seems quite unable to carry a commission & has put on pounds & pounds & is far too pleased with himself. Perhaps he will improve. But in addition, he is extremely boring, & just has not a word to say for himself — just sits there trying to look important. Aitken is too damned dreary & does not seem able to help it. The complete little Tory, & very dry. In addition, he cannot pronounce "th" — & so talks about "dey told me to come & do de ding anodder day" — which is rather irritating. But Flake is the queen of them all — has such a silly looking, idiot & so damned wet. And the trouble is, he has now reached the stage where he is downright terrified of me. I have done my best to help the man, be decent & kind to him — & then he goes & does some damn silly thing again & I lose my temper & shout at him & there we are again. It's quite a problem.

The trouble with most of these people is that they got their commissions far too easily — & no matter how much I shit on them, they are still very pleased with themselves to be officers — & no amount of rocketing, extra duties, & stopping of leave seems to make them come down to earth.

I think they are improving a bit, but it is an exceptionally slow process. And it does not prevent them from being fearfully dull & boring.

Solomon will always be the same - a nice lad & plenty of guts & hard working - but not at all interesting. Jim Headley is a dear, kind, gutless old granny - & again very dull. Ben, as you know by now, I like very much, probably more than I would most British officers - but it is a bit awkward for him: for me, as he is just one of the subalterns. It will be better when he becomes second i/c, & a captain.

It is now 11 o'clock - I must begin the week well & go to bed early. I have mapped out quite a strenuous weeks training - which will entail about 80 miles marching for me & everybody else. I hope my feet will be able to take it. I am also hoping desperately - for a letter or something tomorrow - it has been blank since last Monday.

I do long for you, my darling Barbara. XXXXXXH.

Monday. Oct 27th. I have really enjoyed myself today. I had to go out & do a recce for a good place to take the Coy for a long march & some good training, & a night out in the open. So Ben & I set off in the Austin at 10-30 this morning, with haversack rations & water bottles full of cold tea. We made off due ~~west~~ east, into the hills which you can see run as a backbone right down the centre of Palestine. We left the main road, & went along a field track as far as Beit Nabala, which I have mentioned before. From there, we began to climb, & from

where the track became rocky & rough. The rains in winter are so heavy that everything is washed down except the rocks & stones - & so this track was equal to a very rough river bed, & also climbing steeply up at the same time. It was amazing how the little car managed about ten miles of this, but it did. The country was really lovely - wild & rocky & hilly & some trees & then when we reached the top, a terrific view of the plain below & the sea beyond. The day was very hot, & very blue, & very clear. We passed numerous Arabs, with donkeys & camels, & on their way to market - & they said 'Sada' & I answered the same. Ben, who could Arabic among his languages, went into more complicated forms of greetings. The greeting business among the Arabs is a highly complicated affair - it depends on many things - who speaks first - & then there is a definite answer to each particular form of greeting. The Arabs are very pleasant & friendly. It is really amazing that a British & a French officer can go freely together in those parts - when 3 & ½ years ago it would have meant certain death, to go alone & unprotected. But they are incredibly evil looking, even if they are by no means as evil as they look - & indescribably dirty & diseased & lazy. We passed through numerous villages, some quite big ones, such as Bir Natala, Qabya, Nabeul & Kharkata - all of which can be found on the map - & for this awful track. The Romans would have had a thanking great metalled road through there long ago - & electric light &

water & drains & everything else. But I suppose that a hell of a good argument can be raised against such progress. When you have a look round the world today.

We ate our lunch on the side of a hill & thoroughly enjoyed it — & I decided that there must be more days like this. The disappointing part now, is that when we arrived back in camp, about 3.0 pm, I found that a special job had been pushed onto us. So we cannot now carry out the training tomorrow & Wednesday, which was the idea, but must wait a few days.

Sergeant Major Jack arrived back from S. Africa yesterday, very pleased with himself, & for good reason. He had had five weeks actual leave with his wife & kids. The lucky devil. I'm a bit sorry he is back in a way — he is so blasted thick — I have to be super careful that he has grasped a thing — whereas Kiley is extremely quick in the uptake. And moreover — Kiley is very much better suited to train up my Jewish Sergeant Major elect. I shall have to see what I can do to arrange things.

I wrote a note to Bet last night, asking him to come down & stay ~~the~~ a week end with me — this morning I decided I could not face it & tore it up. It would mean being continuously with him for two whole days, & having to talk a spate of nonsense, & not be able to write to you at all. We are an odd pair, aren't we darling, with our likes & dislikes & not being able to be bothered. Though really, I think I am taking a step in the right

direction, by eliminating the silly people - those who are not worth while. But after the war, we really must make more of an effort to find some friends who we really like - apart from the tiny circle of yours & mine & ours. I have now finished my Christmas Autographs - & ~~apart from~~ not counting Wm. North people & customers, I have sent three to Broadland people - Gordon, Bill & Wm. & Anita. And I just wonder not know who to send any more to! Certainly not those silly Holdsworths, or any of the Emerys or Pullmans - & God forbid, Sydney Stroll. Blimey - what a bunch.

Frank Macarthur's belated letter arrived today - three weeks from Cairo. He said how delighted he had been to see me, & I was the only person he had met out here with whom he had any thing in common. That was very kind of him, & I do feel just the same about him. I hope to goodness he will be careful on his new job, which is highly dangerous - because, as I have said before, I am counting on him as a friend of ours when this war ends. But my trouble seems to be that it takes me so long to really get to know a person, & for that person to get to know me. You remember at Bewsey he liked Frank, but could make very little of him. And all the way to the M.E. Bea was my chief friend - not until the three of us were together in Cairo, did I realise how

~~that~~ Frank was worth a million Rex's! The trouble is really, that it is almost impossible to know a person until he or she has been tested & tried out in some way. In civil life there is seldom time, & practically never an opportunity. With the three of us in Cairo, ~~—~~ afterwards for those weeks at the I.S.D. Frank & I just carried on in our fixed purpose of getting in touch with our wives as soon as possible & learning as much as possible, & seeing as much of the Country as possible, ~~—~~ generally ordering our lives. Whereas Rex just degenerated — made passes at the first girls to look at him, was idle in sightseeing, slept on his bed in the afternoon, ~~—~~ talked a hell of a lot of nonsense & neglected Marjorie. And during this time Frank & I drew closer together & formed a solid friendship & realised that the others ideals & ideals were based on solid ground. And here we are — very close & firm friends. But how can you reproduce all that in civil life?

Maybe, the answer is to have more acquaintances, & to be less intolerant. We shall work it all out when we begin again — it is not a matter about which it is necessary to plan ahead.

But I can promise you that you will like Frank very much indeed. And I hope he will be careful.

No letters or anything, again today, darling. Goodnight sweetest heart. xxxxxxx H.

Tuesday. Oct 28th. And 11-0 p.m. — so I will just finish this on the other side of the page & post it in the morning.

I went to the dentist today. The first time since last December; the man gave me a very thorough look over & I was very pleased to hear that there was nothing to do at all. The hygienist gave me a scrape & a polish. That's good isn't it, darling? & shows that I am looking after myself & carrying out at least one of your instructions to me. Also I really think my hair is O.K. too, in spite of my breeze up a few months ago. And my corporation is certainly not increasing. So here I am — fit, strong, healthy, & goddam bloody miserable. Dear's capacity for worry & misery & sheer unhappiness & deathly boredom passes all understanding. Though boredom is perhaps hardly the word — I can never be bored, when married to you & loved by you, even at so great a distance; it is more the futile, horrible waste of time.

I am so longing for more word from you — but the mails seem to have gone completely wrong again & I am not alone in suffering from no letters & no anything.

I am enclosing a magazine cutting of Col Heinrich — for you to see what he looks like. Not exactly a beauty, but quite a pleasant face. Kindly — & not one of those silly bum Regular Army ones — but yet the keen, clear cut, business type. But with nothing behind it all. You will notice that he was a bit warm under the arms! The Chief Rabbi's features are somewhat hidden.

I cannot write any more now — I feel far too unhappy tonight — & just long with all my heart to hold you close & tight in my arms, & kiss you & look at your lovely sweetness. I do love you so much. Love & a big kiss to Marie, please —

All my love to my own darling Barbara,

x x x from Harry x x

79

Mrs. H. Massey.
c/o. Mrs W. Paul.
Lynwood.
Candlemas Lane.
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H. Massey.